

TOPIC 14: FOOT CARE**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

People with diabetes often have problems with their feet due to narrowing or blockage of the blood vessels that results in poorer circulation. They may also experience decreased sensation in their feet that prevents them from feeling cuts or other injuries. Daily inspection and care of the feet, wearing well-fitting shoes, prompt care for problems and keeping blood glucose in the target range are all important in preventing serious infections that can lead to amputation.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Look at and wash your feet daily
2. Wear shoes and socks that protect your feet
3. Contact your doctor with worrisome symptoms such as changes in color or temperature of your feet, cuts or open sore areas, or signs of infection
4. Get an annual foot exam.

BACKGROUND

People with diabetes are at risk for foot problems. Over time, diabetes may cause nerve damage resulting in a loss or change in sensation called neuropathy. Although this can happen in other areas of the body, it is most common in feet. Decreased sensation often occurs gradually and many people aren't aware that they have less "feeling" in their feet.

People with diabetes also tend to have more narrowing or blockages of their blood vessels, resulting in poorer circulation (blood flow) to the feet.

When people with diabetes get cuts, blisters or sores, they are at risk of these wounds going unnoticed and getting worse. Most amputations in the U.S. are due to severe infections from foot wounds in persons with diabetes.

It is very important for people with diabetes to check their feet daily. Look for:

- Cuts, blisters, sores
- Change in temperature (hot or cold skin)
- Change in color (pale, or with red or blue patches)
- Signs and symptoms of infection, such as redness, warmth, and pus/drainage
- Swelling
- Pain
- Dry, cracking skin
- Sweaty skin

- Athlete's foot (fungus) or other rashes. Athlete's foot is caused by a fungus that grows in warm, moist environments. It is usually itchy and can often cause scaling between the toes or on the soles of the feet, and red patches with or without tiny bumps
- Corns and calluses

HOW TO KEEP FEET HEALTHY

Inspect your feet every day. Use a mirror to see the bottom/sides of feet. Catching problems early is the best way to treat them

Don't soak feet. Wash them well with mild soap and room temperature water daily. Dry them gently, including between the toes.

Don't go barefoot. This can cause rough, dry skin that cracks. People with diabetes may step on something and not feel it due to neuropathy. If the injury isn't discovered and treated infection may occur possibly leading to serious injury.

Use lotion on dry feet, but not between the toes. Lotion may add to fungal growth by making the skin between the toes more moist.

Wear well-fitting socks and shoes at all times. Too tight or too loose shoes can cause rubbing, blisters and sores.

Protect your feet from very hot or cold temperatures. Don't put your feet in hot water and never use hot water bottles, heating pads, or electric blankets. You may not feel how hot the temperature is and may burn your feet without knowing it.

Keep blood flowing to your feet by wiggling your toes and moving your ankles while sitting. Don't cross your legs for long periods of time.

Trim toenails straight across and avoid cutting them too short. File the nail to get rid of rough edges.

See a foot specialist (podiatrist) regularly if you have calluses/corns, other foot problems, or if you have difficulty seeing your feet to perform foot and nail care.

WHEN TO CALL YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

A healthcare provider should be contacted if there are:

- Cuts (break in the skin) that have not healed in 2 days
- Signs of infection (swelling, warmth, redness)
- Changes in color, shape, or temperature (coolness or warmth)
- Ingrown toenails

PATIENT OUTCOMES/GOALS

By the end of the educational session, the client with diabetes will be able to:

- State why it is important to check his/her feet
- Perform a self-foot exam
- State what he/she is looking for, when examining his/her feet
- List 3 things to do to prevent foot injuries.
- List 2 signs they need to contact health care provider

CHW ACTIONS	PARTICIPANT ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the participant how he/she currently cares for feet. • Discuss the importance of checking feet daily for: cuts, blisters, sores, change in temperature or color of skin, signs of infection (redness, warmth, pus/drainage) swelling, pain, dry, cracking skin, sweaty skin, presence of Athlete's foot or other rashes. • Emphasize that loss of sensation in feet can occur gradually and without notice • Discuss proper foot care which includes keeping feet clean with daily bathing and toweling dry (dry between the toes), using lotion and/or moisturizers to dry feet and using powder for moist feet, cutting toenails straight across and gently file to get rid of rough edges, wearing shoes and socks that fit. • Discuss avoiding soaking the feet, applying heat to the feet, and going barefoot, • Emphasize getting professional care for corns, calluses, cuts or wounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check your feet daily for any injury and wash/care for them properly. • Wear correctly fitting shoes and sox that protect feet. • Contact your health care provider regarding any injury or changes in your feet that concern you. • Schedule an appointment with a foot care provider.

TOOLS/TEACHING AIDES

- Foot Care Kits typically include: mirror, nail file, lotion, nail clippers, pumice stone and good socks.

HANDOUTS

1. **Topic 14 Coversheet**[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
2. **Tips for Good Foot Care**[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
Source: [Learning About Diabetes, Inc.](#) 2006

3. Take Care of Your Feet for a Lifetime[English](#) | [Spanish](#)Source: [National Diabetes Education Program \(NDEP\)](#)**4. Action Plan**.....[English](#) | [Spanish](#)Source: [Public Health – Seattle & King County](#)**REFERENCES**

Type 2 Diabetes: A Curriculum for Patients and Health Professionals, American Diabetes Association, 2002.

The Joslin Guide to Diabetes: A Program for Managing Your Treatment, Beaser, R. S. Fireside ed./Joslin Diabetes Center, 2005.

Feet Can Last a Lifetime - A Health Care Provider's Guide to Preventing Diabetes Foot Problems. Available only at website:<http://www.ndep.nih.gov/materials/pubs/feet.html>

The Foot Book. Habershaw, G.H. & Hollerorth, H.J. Podiatry Unit of the Joslin Diabetes Center, 2001.

American Diabetes Association,

American Diabetes Association. <http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/complications/foot-complications/>

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